

Our River...Our Home...Our History

1. Rio Grande Valley History Lesson

2. Guiding Questions

What is the history of the Rio Grande Valley?

Who lived here before me?

Which countries have ruled over the Valley?

3. Learning objectives:

1. To create framework in which to activate prior knowledge by linking Science TEKS to the local history and environment.
2. To develop the students civic pride through an understanding of the history of their community
3. To develop the students self-identity through an understanding of the people who settled their community
4. To increase student academic success by increasing family involvement

4. Detailed Background of the Topic

Script for PowerPoint: (* denotes slide)

*Title Slide: ***Our River...Our Home...Our History***

*For thousands of years, the water of the Rio Grande has been a source of life for plants, animals, and people.

*Until about 1750, the people who relied on the water of the Rio Grande Valley were Native Americans like the **Coahuiltecans**. Then things changed.

*In 1750, the Rio Grande Valley was not a part of the United States. Why is that? Well, one reason is that the United States did not exist as a nation until the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.

*In 1750, the 13 original states were still British colonies which were ruled by the King of England. So what country did the Rio Grande Valley belong to?

*The Rio Grande Valley and all of the country of Mexico belonged to Spain.

*Spain controlled land from Alaska down to Texas and through Mexico down to through South America. The Spanish king wanted to make sure that Spain's lands in North America would always belong to Spain.

*He decided to send settlers to build homes and towns along the Rio Grande. The king selected a strong leader to carry out these plans.

*His name was **Jose de Escandon**. For more than 25 years, Jose de Escandon had worked with Spanish settlers in Mexico. Now, Escandon asked successful farmers and ranchers in northern Mexico to move to land along the Rio Grande. He promised them free land and reduced taxes if they agreed to settle the new frontier.

*500 families accepted his offer.

*Escandon was a good organizer. He surveyed the land and named it **Nuevo Santander**.

*Escandon set up 14 settlements which were called **Las Villas Del Norte**. The *villas* included: Camargo, Reynosa, Mier, Revilla (now called Guerrero), Laredo, and Dolores. Each *villa* was led by a *capitan* who was under the authority of Escandon. One of the settlers' first tasks was to build homes called *jacales*.

*In present day Starr County, stone was available.

*So the settlers made their homes out of stone. Some stone *jacales* can still be seen today.

*In what is now Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, stone was not available.

*So the *jacales* were made of wood and mud. These *jacales* have decomposed and cannot be seen today.

*In addition to building their homes, the settlers needed food. They raised cattle for meat and for their leather hides. They used the fat, called tallow, to make candles.

*At first, the settlers also raised sheep for wool and for meat; however, they soon realized that there was not enough grass in the area to raise sheep so they had to switch to only raising cattle.

*The settlers also planted fields of cotton, corn, beans, and squash.

*They worked to dig blocks of salt out of the salt lakes in the area.

*Their hard work paid off, and in about 1760 the settlers celebrated when they received documents from the King of Spain giving them the land they were promised. After the settlers of Nuevo Santander received their *porciones* of land, they continued to be citizens of Spain for about another 50 years.

*Then, in 1810, Mexico began fighting Spain for independence.

*In 1821, Mexico, won its independence from Spain.

*All of Texas had also been part of Spain. So when Mexico won its independence from Spain, all of Texas became part of Mexico.

*In time, settlers in Texas decided they wanted to be free. They did not want to be ruled by Mexico. On March 2, 1836, Texas declared its independence from Mexico and later won its freedom.

*Texas did not belong to Mexico anymore. Texas was now its own country. Its first president was Sam Houston. After a few years, Texans decided they did not want to be a free nation. They wanted to belong to the United States.

*In 1845, Texas became a state in the United States.

*VIDEO segment: Discovery Education Streaming

*Let's stop and look back at all the changes that had taken place in the Rio Grande Valley up to this point. First, Texas belonged to Spain and then Mexico. Later, Texas became an independent country. In 1845, Texas decided to join the United States.

*Now, let's see what happens to the Valley once Texas became a state of the United States. When Texas became a state, the border between Texas and Mexico was not the Rio Grande like it is today. Back then, the Texas border was at the Nueces River (by present day Corpus Christi). Texas land had always ended at the Nueces River. All the maps showed the border was supposed to be at the Nueces River, but some people in the United States did not like that. They wanted more land. They wanted the border between Texas and Mexico to be at the Rio Grande.

*Leaders in the United States decided to fight to get more land from Mexico. In 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico. They fought for two years.

*VIDEO segment: Discovery Education Streaming

*Finally, Mexico surrendered the land north of the Rio Grande, including Texas, California, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. The border between the United States and Mexico was now set at the Rio Grande.

*When the U.S.-Mexico border was set at the Rio Grande, the *villas* of Nuevo Santander were split between two countries. The *villas* south of the river were in Mexico; the *villas* north of the river were in the United States. Even though many changes had taken place, the people of Nuevo Santander kept busy farming and ranching on their land.

*During the war, Americans from outside Texas saw the opportunity to make money in South Texas. They moved to our area to start new businesses. For many years, one very successful business was transporting cargo on the Rio Grande using steamboats.

*Some businessmen came to buy and sell land. In the 1920s, these businessmen invited American farmers to come see the rich farm land. The farmers liked the warm weather. Since there was no snow, crops could be grown all year. They began calling the area by a new name: The Magic Valley.

*Now, we call our home the Rio Grande Valley. Over the centuries, many changes have come, but one thing remains the same: the river.

*Today, the Rio Grande is still a source of life for plants, animals, and people.

5. Preparation Instructions for Teachers

- PowerPoint: *Our River, Our Home, Our History*: Preview the PowerPoint. It is fully narrated.

There are two Discovery Education Streaming videos embedded into the PowerPoint. If you have access to Discovery Education Streaming, insert links into the PowerPoint so the video will start by

clicking on the PowerPoint slide. A complete citation for the video segment is found at the end of the PowerPoint presentation in the credits.

If you do not have access to Discovery Education Streaming, either find another video source or delete the slide. The history of the Valley is only supplemented by the video; it is not crucial to the presentation.

6 . Lesson Activities

- Brainstorm to find out what students know about Valley history
- Watch the PowerPoint
- Complete A-E-I-O-U Notes based on PowerPoint
 - Instructional Hints:
 - Preview video to familiarize yourself with the content and to determine points at which to pause video
 - Give each student a copy of the A-E-I-O-U Video Notes
 - Review the table and give examples of appropriate responses
 - Inform the students that they should NOT write during the video
 - Explain that you will be pausing the video every 1 – 2 minutes and will give them time (approximately 60 seconds) to write down their thoughts
 - At conclusion of video, allow students to Turn & Talk in pairs

A - E - I - O - U Presentation Notes

"Our River, Our Home, Our History"

Name: _____

Date: _____

<p>A Adjective: One or two words that describe something you saw or learned</p>	
<p>E Emotion: Describe how a part of the video made you feel</p>	
<p>I Interesting: Write about something you found interesting</p>	
<p>O Oh!: Describe something that made you say "Oh!"</p>	
<p>U Um?: Write a <u>question</u> about something you learned or want to know more about</p>	

- Reflection writing activity
Students will write a one paragraph note to a family member using the writing prompt:
Today, I learned something about Valley history that I did not know before. I learned that...
- Students will glue the A-E-I-O-U Presentation Notes into their Science Journal so it can be used as a reference throughout the year as history is woven into their Science TEKS
- CLOZE – go back to Brainstorming notes to analyze previous comments and add new information

7. Assessment

- Reflection writing activity will be the assessment of learning

8. List of Skills that are Targeted

- Understanding of a sequence of events
- Writing a short summary of historical events

9. Lists of Resources

- PowerPoint: *Our River, Our Home, Our History*
- A-E-I-O-U Presentation Notes